

**MINUTES OF THE
WORKFORCE SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE**

August 16, 2000 - 9:00 a.m. - Room 414 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Robert M. Muhlestein,
Senate Chair
Sen. D. Edgar Allen
Sen. Parley G. Hellewell
Sen. Lorin V. Jones
Rep. Jeff Alexander
Rep. Sheryl L. Allen
Rep. Ron Bigelow
Rep. Ben C. Ferry
Rep. Brent H. Goodfellow
Rep. Rebecca Lockhart
Rep. Gordon E. Snow
Rep. David L. Zolman

Members Excused:

Rep. Jackie Biskupski
Rep. Neil A. Hansen
Rep. Michael R. Styler, House Chair

Members Absent:

Rep. Lloyd W. Frandsen
Sen. Gene Davis

Staff Present:

Arthur L. Hunsaker,
Research Analyst
Keith M. Woodwell,
Associate General Counsel
Audrey Wendel,
Legislative Secretary

Note: Names of others present and copies of information distributed at the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

- 1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes** - Sen. Jones called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

MOTION: Sen. Hellewell moved to approve the May 17 and June 14, 2000 minutes. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Alexander and Sen. Allen absent for the vote.

- 2. Experiences of Former Long-term Welfare Recipients** - Ms. Mary Jane Taylor and Ms. Amanda Barusch of the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work, distributed a handout titled, "Multiple Impacts of Welfare Reform in Utah: Experiences of Former Long-term Welfare Recipients," an executive summary of a report submitted to the Department of Workforce Services, from which they gave their presentation.

Sen. Jones relinquished the chair to Sen. Muhlestein upon his arrival.

Ms. Mary Beth Vogel, Project Coordinator, University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work, shared an example of one family and the factors that impact their involvement with public assistance.

Ms. Barusch concluded her presentation by saying that welfare reform is working for a large portion of people who have been on assistance, but that there is a smaller group of people who continue to struggle to live on their approved level of assistance.

Rep. Ferry asked for more information about those individuals who might qualify for the 20% extension. Ms. Vogel referred to the graph of the six extension criteria on page 28 of the handout.

Rep. Bigelow asked what percentage of individuals with depression the state can realistically help. Ms. Barusch pointed out that not everyone with depression can be cured. For most individuals it is a lifelong conflict, but with proper treatment many lives are improved.

Sen. Hellewell asked if there was a way to deal with those on public assistance who waste their money on large amounts of cigarettes and alcohol which takes money away from taking care of them and their families. Ms. Barusch pointed out that drug and alcohol addictions are only present in the minority of the population of welfare recipients, but said that the study did not specifically ask individuals about tobacco addiction. She agreed that addictions take primacy in budgeting monthly funds.

Ms. Gina Cornia, Utah Issues, said the report does show some of welfare reform's success, but that it also highlights some of the problems which remain. She cited a few examples.

Ms. Karen Silver, Advocate, Salt Lake Community Action Program, cited more examples of continuing problems and expressed concern with the way in which the 20% extension is being administered. She urged the committee to consider increasing funding for child care and qualifying for federal child care development fund money.

3. Job Training Audit - Office of the Legislative Auditor General - Wayne Welsh, Director, Office of the Legislative Auditor General, introduced James Behunin, who supervised the audit. Mr. Behunin distributed a handout titled, "A Follow-up Review of Utah's Employment and Training Programs" from which he gave his presentation. He said that the department has done an outstanding job of streamlining job training and welfare functions to meet customer needs, but he is concerned that the number of employees has not been reduced to the extent expected. It appears that the regional councils do not have, or at least don't exercise, the degree of authority granted in statute. This authority is being exercised by the department's management team. Mr. Behunin reviewed the recommendations of the audit, including potential amendments to statute to clarify the roles and authority of the department and the regional councils. The audit also recommends that the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation be consolidated within the Department of Workforce Services as a separate division for several reasons, including duplication of clients served.

Rep. Allen asked about the uncommitted 18 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds Utah can spend. Mr. Behunin explained that the money is available to be used for certain purposes, but is not being used. He suggested that there should be discussion on how that money can be used to meet needs.

Rep. Goodfellow said that if the Office of Rehabilitation were consolidated within the Department of Workforce Services and the economy experienced a downturn, the people that vocational rehabilitation serves would not get the extra services they need.

Mr. Robert Gross, Executive Director, Department of Workforce Services, introduced Mr. Randy Emery, Chair of the State Council on Workforce Services. Mr. Gross said that he is pleased with the findings of the audit as a report card of the department's efforts to consolidate five departments into one, and that they are about 3/5 of the way through the process of merging. He respectfully disagreed with Rep. Goodfellow's comments about the success of the department hinging to some degree on the strength of the economy. Mr. Gross addressed the 18 million in TANF funds by indicating that it is the same rainy day money that they have mentioned frequently before the committee and pointed out that the disposition of the funds is being discussed with the regional and state councils as well as the Governors Office of Planning and Budget.

Mr. Randy Emery said that the regional councils are where much of the work is done, and consists of volunteers who are working very hard, so he does not understand why the audit says that the regional councils aren't as involved as they could be.

Sen. Muhlestein asked if the department had any comment on the vocational rehabilitation recommendations. Mr. Gross said that the department has no position.

Rep. Ferry pointed out that not all of those on public assistance have been made aware of the various services for which they may qualify. Mr. Gross acknowledged that this is still a concern and he feels it can be dealt with by additional training of case workers.

Ms. Jill Kennedy, Chair, State Board of Education and State Board of Applied Technology Education, respectfully disagreed with the audit recommendation to consolidate the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation within the Department of Workforce Services. She pointed out that the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation is concerned with rehabilitation and education with job placement as an end result. She questioned whether the two departments' objectives are compatible.

Mr. Blaine Peterson, Executive Director, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, said that on the federal level, vocational rehabilitation is also within the education arm of government. He disputed the point in the audit that there is duplication of services. He disputed the point that one case manager can handle both Workforce Services issues and the unique vocational rehabilitation issues. He disputed the point that the goals of the Department of Workforce Services and the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation are the same.

Rep. Bigelow said he feels the employees are the ones who make the organization cost-effective. He asked how consolidation would change that. Mr. Peterson said that the department

is not only successful because of individuals, but also because of the structure of vocational rehabilitation.

Mr. Larry Bunkall, President, Utah Manufacturer's Association, said it has also been suggested that the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation should be consolidated with the Labor Commission. He argued that the State Office of Rehabilitation is just as compatible with the Labor Commission as it is with the Department of Workforce Services.

Ms. Linda Smith, Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities, said that unemployment is very high among those with disabilities. Those who work can be productive. She said that there needs to be more emphasis on helping them have a career in order to keep them off welfare. The Department of Workforce Services' emphasis is too much on getting a job, and not enough on a career, which is what individuals with disabilities need.

Ms. Corey Rowley, Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities, said that individuals with disabilities need to have a case worker who knows exactly how to help meet their specific needs. She pointed out that the case workers for the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation are specifically trained to effectively assist those with disabilities.

4. Proposed Statutory Changes - Department of Workforce Services - Ms. Sarah Brenna Policy Analyst, Department of Workforce Services, and Ms. Virginia Smith, Deputy Director, Department of Workforce Services, introduced the handout titled, "Department of Workforce Services Proposed Statutory Changes for 2001," from which they gave their presentation.

5. Committee Business

6. Adjourn

MOTION: Sen. Allen moved to adjourn at 11:52. The motion passed unanimously.